

BORN OF GOD
John 1:11-13

Intro: After today Lucille and I will be away from you for five Sundays. As most of you know, we leave next Saturday for London, and then on to Oxford where we will be with our son-in-law, Frank James, his wife, our daughter, Carolyn, and our little four year old granddaughter, Allison. We will be with them for four and a half weeks, returning to Portland on July 18. In my over 40 years of ministry, this will be our longest time away that we have ever taken. I probably haven't been as careful about taking vacations as I should have been because there have been many of these years that I have not been away at all.

But we are going to miss each one of you, and miss our fellowship with you. You can be sure that, as hard as it will be to leave our children over in England, we will be looking forward to getting back to our family here and to all of you. As many of you have prayed for us daily, we hope you will continue to pray for us and our children while we are away. And pray for the men who will be speaking in my absence. You will be getting a letter this week telling you who the men will be who will be ministering while we are away. I trust that you will not only pray for them, but that you will be just as faithful in attending the services while I am away as you are when I am here.

As we go, we fully expect to be back, but we can't ever be absolutely sure, can we? And so I have been praying that the Lord would make these two services today a special blessing for all of us, and perhaps typical of the ministry that I have had with you over the almost ten years of our existence as a church. For that reason I believe that the Lord has led me to preach the Gospel this morning. Tonight I plan to bring a message especially for believers as we look into the truth found in 2 Chronicles 20. The first time Lucille ever heard me speak, I spoke from 2 Chronicles 20. That was at the First Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. Through the years we have both loved that chapter. Please read it this afternoon, and come back tonight if you possibly can.

When we speak of preaching the Gospel, we usually think of people who do not know the Lord, but there certainly is a place for preaching the Gospel to those who are already saved. There is so much for all of us to learn about the Gospel. We can never exhaust its truth. We all have learned more Gospel since we have been saved than we knew at the time we were saved. We can learn from the epistles of the NT that the Apostles spoke much about the Gospel to the people and to the churches to whom they wrote. So it should be with us.

I have mentioned a number of times recently that I have been reading again The Diary and Life of Andrew Bonar, who was born in Scotland in 1810, and who died in Scotland at the age of 82 in 1892. I have underlined much of the text of the book because he said so many things that are well-worth remembering.

One thing that he said about preaching the Gospel was this:

I notice now (he was 52 when he wrote this) that continual omission of the Gospel in our sermons, or passing from it quickly, arises from self-righteousness. We feel as if there was not so much need of pressing this truth. Whereas, self-righteousness is such in ministers and people that nothing but the incessant repetition of the Gospel can be right (p. 218).

What he meant was that if we forget the Gospel, we can so easily forget our sinfulness, our need of Christ, and so we can easily become proud and self-righteous.

There is nothing like the Gospel to humble us, and to keep us humble. We need to be reminded what God did, what He had to do, in order to provide salvation for us. And the remembrance of that is designed to keep us walking humbly with our God.

The Gospel is presented many ways in the Bible. Different aspects of the Gospel are emphasized in different passages. I am sure that none of us will fully understand all that Christ accomplished through His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead, until we ourselves are in glory. But we need to hear it over and over and over again. True Christians never tire of the Gospel. We can all sing that hymn which has these words:

I love to tell the story: for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story, that I have loved so long.

So let us consider together the Gospel according to John 1:11-13.

These three verses are really an excerpt from a larger passage beginning with verse 1 and going down through verse 18. The verses speak of Christ. And they have two things to tell us about Him. First, He was rejected. Secondly, He was accepted. Many rejected the Lord when He came. But there were those who received Him, or to state it the other way in

which John wrote about it here, they believed in Him, or on Him. This is the story of our Lord's earthly ministry: many rejected Him; others believed on Him. And this has been the history of the Gospel from the very beginning of time: some have believed; others have not.

Let us think, then, for a few moments about:

I. OUR LORD'S REJECTION (John 1:11).

Anyone who has read the verses which lead up to verse 11 should notice the contrast between what John the Apostle wrote about John the Baptist in verse 6 with what He said about the Lord here in verse 11. John the Baptist was "sent from God." Our Lord "came."

There was a lot of difference between John the Baptist and our Lord. John was a man; our Lord was and continues to be God. John's existence began with His conception. Our Lord, being the Son of God, was without beginning. He is eternal.

Other passages speak of our Lord being "sent," but here in John 1 we read that John the Baptist was "sent"; our Lord "came." Both were on a divine mission, but, of the two, our Lord certainly had the most difficult mission to fulfill. Both died. John the Baptist died as a martyr; our Lord died as a sacrifice for the sins of His people. But when John the Apostle emphasized that our Lord "came," he was indicating that our Lord voluntarily came to do what the Father sent Him to do. He voluntarily came to suffer and to die for your sins and mine.

Twice in verse 11 we are told about those to whom the Lord came, but there is a different worth noting here. The gender of the first "his own" is neuter; the gender of the second is masculine. The difference is such that we could paraphrase it like this: He came into His own things, His own world, this part of His creation, but His own people received Him not.

The Old Testament teaches us that God chose to work through the people of Israel, the sons of Abraham according to the flesh. The Scriptures were given to them. The prophets of the OT were Jews. Our Lord was born of Jewish virgin. However, it was not the Lord's purpose to save only Jews; He intended from the beginning to save Gentiles as well. However, when our Lord entered into His world, and came by birth to His chosen people, they, for the most part, rejected Him. They did not welcome Him. They rejected Him. Some were saved, but

officially He was rejected. And you can see in His rejection that this, from a human point-of-view was a threat to the salvation of Jews and Gentiles alike! As Isaiah the prophet predicted 700 years before Christ "came,"

He was despised and rejected of men;
 a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
 and we hid as it were our faces from him;
 he was despised, and we esteemed him not
 (Isa. 53:3).

However, the purposes of God cannot fail. In fact, the rejection of our Lord by Jews and Gentiles alike was a part of His plan because it was as a result of that rejection that He was to die. And it was through that death that salvation would be provided according to the eternal purpose of God.

And so, while many rejected Him, yet some, yes, even many, "received him."

So let us look at:

II. HIS ACCEPTANCE (John 1:12, 13).

This is what it takes to be saved: the acceptance, the reception of Christ. And the Apostle John here made receiving Christ identical with believing on Christ, trusting in Christ, depending upon Him to do the work of salvation.

John wanted all to know that salvation is not a human work, but it is a divine work. We do not save ourselves. God saves us, saves us through Christ, and this is the only way that anyone can ever be saved.

But John was not using the word salvation here. Instead he was speaking about becoming a child of God!

Now there is a sense in which, because we are creatures whom God has made, that in that natural sense we are all God's children. Paul spoke of this when he was preaching in Athens, as we read in Acts 17:28. But John was not talking about that. He was speaking of a work of God by which spiritually we become members of God's family, His born ones, those who are partakers of the divine nature, as Peter described it in 2 Peter 1:4. In order to be the children of God in this sense, we must receive Christ; we must depend upon Him to make us members of God's family.

God gives us "the power," i.e., the authority, the right,

the enabling power, "to become" what we are not, "the sons," or more correctly, "the children," the born ones, "of God."

And receiving Christ is described as believing "on his name," i.e, the name of Christ. What does this mean?

When Spurgeon once preached on this passage, and was dealing with this phrase, he suggested that his people look at the names of the Lord that are used in the first part of this chapter. You will find that there are three:

- 1) The Word.
- 2) The Life.
- 2) The Light.

As the Word, Christ is the full revelation of the Father, and the final message of God to sinners. As the Life He delivers us from spiritual death. As the Light He takes away the terrible darkness into which every person is born into this world. To believe in the Name of Christ includes all of this. We believe that He is the Son of God, that He has come to be the Savior of all who will trust Him, that He makes us spiritually alive, and that He brings us out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light.

John the Apostle was seeking to help his readers to understand:

- 1) The universality of the Gospel.
- 2) The simplicity of the Gospel.
- 3) The exclusiveness of the Gospel.
- 4) The fruit of the Gospel.

And all of that is here in these verses!

But now, if you are thinking along with John, you will ask, but what about this matter of becoming a child of God? Do you not have to be born in order to become someone's child?

The answer is, "Yes!" It does take a birth. How does that take place, and for whom?

John has already told us that it is by the power, the authoritative, enabling power of God. But in verse 13 he went on to make it even clearer. He stated it negatively three times--that is, what it is not. And then John said what it is.

"Not of blood" -- lit., not of bloods (plural). This has been explained in different ways, but I think that it can best be explained in one or two ways, possibly both.

- 1) That John was speaking of the blood of a father and the blood of a mother. He could have been saying that regardless of who your human father or mother may be, this does not qualify you to be a child of God. In fact, this is what disqualifies us.
- 2) That John was saying that it does not matter if you are Jewish or Gentile, if you are white, or black, American or German, regardless of the color of your skin or the country you are from, regardless of the language you speak, there is no person anywhere in the world at any time in human history who because of who he is can claim to be a child of God.

The Jews of our Lord's day thought that they could, but they were wrong, very, very wrong!

So much for that first negative.

"Nor of the will of the flesh" -- Salvation is not a matter of what man wills to do or have. Our wills are not free; they are dead and in bondage. No person will ever want to be saved, will ever want to become a child of God, if it is left up to him, or to her. And this would include every attempt at doing good works, or self-reformation. Nobody could ever do enough. You do not become a child of God as a result of who you are, nor of what you do.

"Nor of the will of man" -- As far as I am concerned, the best explanation of this phrase is that we do not become the children of God by doing what others tell us to do, even if that person is a priest, or a pastor, or a very religious person, as long as what they tell us is in contradiction to the Word of God. There have always been, and there always will be, until the end, false teachers telling us how to get right with God. Always check what you hear with the Word of God. Any teaching that is different from Scripture is to be immediately, totally, and permanently rejected!

Then how do you become a child of God? We must be **"born of God"**!

Now let me point this important point out about verses 12 and 13. The language here indicates something, as well-known as these verses are, which is rarely pointed out. And it is this: John was saying that before you can receive Christ, before you can believe on His name, you have to be born of God. God's work comes first, and that is what makes it possible for us to receive Christ. That is what makes it possible for us to believe in Christ.

God gives us life, and the first evidence we give that God has done a work in our hearts is that we put our trust in Christ. When a person really believes, you know that he has been "born...of God"!

- Concl: Now listen carefully to me as I close.

God uses two instruments for sure every time a person is born again, and usually a third instrument:

- 1) The Word of God. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:23; Isa. 55:10, 11. No person is ever saved except they hear the Scriptures.
- 2) The Holy Spirit. Cf. John 3:3-5. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to save those whom the Lord intends to save. It is not man's will that saves him, but God's will. Cf. Jas. 1:18,

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The third instrument that God usually uses, but not always is:

- 3) Christians in their witness. Cf. Acts 1:8. Sometimes people are saved just by reading the Word, or by remembering something from the Word that they have known before, but God's usual way is for those of us who know Him to go and tell those who do not know Him.

Therefore the most important thing to be concerned about in our witness is what God is doing. Look for evidence that God is working. Exhort people to believe because no one can be saved except through Christ, but always know that the only way people will believe is for God to give them life, for them to be born of God. THEN, AND ONLY THEN, WILL THEY REALLY PLACE THEIR TRUST IN CHRIST.

May the Lord help us to understand what the work of salvation is, and then may He burden us to tell people wherever we are about the only One Who can save them from their sins and give them a new birth, making them the children of God for ever.